News release

Happy Birthday MMU

16 September 2002

The Met Office's modern Mobile Met. Unit (MMU), which sends forecasters to support personnel in military zones, celebrates its 40th anniversary this week.

Meteorologists have supplied weather information to the Armed Forces for decades, but it wasn't until 20 September 1962 that they actually started doing so while in the field. The MMU, based at RAF Benson, near Oxford, is staffed by volunteers from the Met Office, who are either commissioned, or enlisted, into the RAF Reserves. They undergo exactly the same training as their regular counterparts but while in the field are responsible for providing 'on-the-spot' forecasts for military use. They set their 'office' up in desert, jungle, a ruined factory, or anywhere where their advice is needed.

The unit not only supports the RAF but Royal Navy and Army Units, as well as NATO and other Allied Forces. In recent years it has taken part in six operational detachments in the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia and most recently in Afghanistan. Additionally the MMU undertakes between 15 and 30 exercises per year at a variety of locations worldwide.

Met Office Operations Director Roger Hunt said: "The members of the unit are trained to operate as competent military personnel in the fullest sense of the word alongside their Regular counterparts. Anyone who has crawled along a ditch, in full military kit and with a weapon, on Salisbury Plain, or at Otterburn, on a cold, wet, December night will know exactly what is required - and then they have to get the forecast right! The MMU does it.
"But as well as providing forecasts the Met Office staff work with the military to better understand how the weather impacts on performance, therefore making the most of the conditions to obtain tactical advantage."

Background to MMU

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